

## **Ocean Voices**

**By Sam Farr**

***SeaWeb.org***

I don't have to travel far to find the inspiration for my love of our ocean: I think my home on California's central coast is the most beautiful place in the world, and I consider it my responsibility to care for our waters as best I can.

If you're an ocean fan and haven't visited the central coast, you're missing out. We host millions of tourists each year and grow most of the greens you'll eat for dinner tonight, but our role as ocean conservator is the most important feather in our cap.

Most know the region because of the world-famous Monterey Bay Aquarium, but Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties are also home to one of the most impressive concentrations of ocean research facilities anywhere. You'll find Stanford's Hopkins Marine Station in Monterey, the oldest marine lab on the West Coast whose roots stretch back to 1892. Drive north and you'll pass Moss Landing, home to the Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, a national center for marine education. Complete the trip around the bay to Santa Cruz and you'll come across the University of California's Long Marine Lab, with more than 100 faculty, researchers and graduate students. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

But all these tools are useless if our knowledge doesn't make it into the hands of decision makers. We have 20 often-overlapping federal agencies and 140 laws dictating ocean policy, but we lack the local input necessary for their implementation.

There is a solution on the horizon. I have been working for years on comprehensive ocean governance reform to provide the national guidance and state and local involvement we so desperately need. Critical local knowledge should be provided by regional bodies-made up of representatives from a broad spectrum of scientists and local stakeholders-and incorporated into the decision-making process. And these regional partnerships must be supported by a national framework, including a cabinet-level ocean adviser.

Through the efforts of scientists, we have the knowledge we need to preserve our ocean as a vital ecosystem while maintaining its crucial role as a center of commerce and recreation. We now need the ability to bring that knowledge to those who can use it to help ensure the health of our ocean for many generations to come.